

HONORING MOUNT ZION  
MISSIONARY BAPTIST CHURCH

**HON. BENNIE G. THOMPSON**

OF MISSISSIPPI

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 25, 2014*

Mr. THOMPSON of Mississippi. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to honor Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church Canton, Mississippi.

The population of Madison County, Mississippi has been predominantly African-American since 1840. Prior to 1865, some members of the African-American population, most of whom had arrived in the county as slaves, were permitted to attend worship services, to be baptized and to be married in the area churches. They were also allowed to join established white congregations.

Early county records indicate that slaves were a part of the church communities. The Old Madison Presbyterian Church, the First Presbyterian, and the First Baptist listed a total membership of one hundred and thirty-four. One hundred were slaves and the other thirty-four were whites.

After the Civil War and freedom, African-Americans naturally desired to establish their own houses of worship. In 1865, the newly freed members of the congregation of First Baptist, with encouragement and financial assistance from their white counterparts, organized Mount Zion Baptist Church. Rev. T. J. Drane, pastor of the white church, served as minister receiving for his services a monthly salary of one dollar.

In 1870, Drane and R. B. Johnson donated two acres of land on the northern boundary of the plantation to Mount Zion. The first church was erected on Freedman Hill, located at the corner of North Railroad and Bowman Streets, according to the 1898 George and Dunlap map of Canton. Rev. Drane called for a meeting with council along with Mr. Will Powell from the white Baptist Church to help establish the church.

In addition to serving as pastor, Rev. Drane ran a day school and was assisted by Lillian Highgate, a white female. Rev. Drane received an additional \$1.50 a month for his services. He also organized and maintained the first Sunday school class. All other organizations came into existence after Rev. Drane's resignation. Rev. Jordan Williams replaced him.

Newspapers frequently carried announcements concerning Mount Zion's activities. For example, "Several converts at the Colored Baptist Church were baptized at the railroad culvert," or "Rev. Williams, pastor of the Colored Baptist Church, immersed ten converts last Sunday night". The second church site was across the street where the TWL parking lot is now located.

The third and fourth pastors were Reverends Mass and Davis. The fifth pastor, Rev. R.T. Sims, served for eighteen years and Rev. W. L. Varnado for seven. The seventh through the tenth pastors were as follows: Rev. Bradley, Rev. Morris, Rev. Drew, and Rev. A. D. Purnell.

By the 1920's, the congregation had outgrown the church and Rev. Purnell, along with members, began raising money for a larger building. The new lot for our present church was purchased from Jack Warren. Rev. Purnell asked Mr. S. M. Reddick, Vice President of Madison County Bank, to serve as

custodian over the church's building funds. He also asked if he would direct the building of the church and issue bonds to underwrite construction costs.

The bank issue \$14,000 in bonds. Raymond H. Spencer was the architect of the neoclassical brick structure. He also designed the First Methodist Church of which Reddick was a member. The building was erected in 1929 at the cost of \$35,000. The congregation moved into the new structure February 1930.

Rev. P. F. Parker, the eleventh pastor, with the help of God and members, burned the mortgage. Under his leadership the church grew. For example, the following organizations played an active role in missionary work: Senior Missionary Society, Junior Matrons, Young Woman's Auxiliary, Red Circle/Sunshine Band, Sunday school, Baptist Training Union, Senior Choir, Gospel Chorus, Junior/Beginner's Choir, New Membership Club, Pastor's Aide, Boys' Bible Club and Usher Board. Rev. Parker served until his death in 1970.

Mount Zion continued to serve the African-American community religiously and socially. During the summer of 1964, Mount Zion was the location of a pivotal moment in our state's civil rights struggle. In her autobiography, *Coming of Age in Mississippi*, Ann Moody notes that Mount Zion was the biggest Negro church in Canton and the center of the local marches.

On Friday, May 29, 1964, on the church lawn, six hundred community and church members witnessed the near death beating of McKinley Hamilton, a young African-American man. As a result, eighty church members marched on the Madison County jail in one of the first protest marches in Canton. Mount Zion became known as the "Church of Refuge". In 1968, twelve hundred students from Rogers High School marched because they were outraged over the murder of Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. A group of parents led them to Mount Zion. Rev. Parker opened the doors of the church to them, thus saving them from injury by law enforcement officers waiting for them on Hickory Street in front of High's Funeral Home.

Dr. W. L. Johnson, our twelfth and present pastor, has served for twenty-nine years. His words have power through the Holy Spirit. Under Dr. Johnson's leadership, the church has continued its growth. For example, the church has been air-conditioned, carpeted throughout, a fellowship hall and recreation center built and equipped, four parking lots purchased and surfaced, restrooms were remodeled, a lounge installed, pews padded, a new intercom system purchased, speakers installed in the pulpit and choir loft, additional chairs purchased for the choir and seating areas in the wings, two new copiers, a computer, storage room, and a fifteen passenger van and twenty-seven passenger bus were also purchased. The stained glass windows were repaired, and the pastor study was moved upstairs.

We now have a summer recreation program. Our membership is approximately 500 and still growing. The church is one of the most monumental, intact, and historic resources associated with the Canton African-American Community. As a result of this, the church was recently placed on the registry of Historical Buildings.

Our aim is to give every God-seeking person an opportunity to receive salvation. The

church clearly reflects the importance of the social and religious life of the African-American community from its birth in 1865 up to the present. Let us resolve to make service to Christ a priority in our lives.

Mr. Speaker, I ask my colleagues to join me in recognizing Mount Zion Missionary Baptist Church.

HONORING THE 25TH ANNUAL  
BRONX DOMINICAN DAY PARADE

**HON. JOSÉ E. SERRANO**

OF NEW YORK

IN THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

*Friday, July 25, 2014*

Mr. SERRANO. Mr. Speaker, I would like to pay tribute to the Bronx Dominican Day Parade (La Gran Parada Dominicana del Bronx) which will take place on Sunday, July 27th, 2014. This is the 25th year of this important community event, which celebrates the heritage and culture of the Dominican community in New York City. It is one that is eagerly anticipated by the Dominican and Bronx communities each year.

As the second largest Latino community in New York City, Dominicans have made invaluable contributions to New York City, and to the Bronx in particular. While Northern Manhattan is perhaps best known for their large Dominican community, I am proud to say that Census Bureau statistics now show that the Bronx is home to the largest Dominican community in New York City. And I am even prouder to represent a community has enriched our borough with a unique culture, spirit, and drive to live the American Dream.

The Dominican community is an important part of the diverse tapestry that makes up New York City. Thousands of Dominican professionals and students have served as community leaders in the Bronx in many different areas, including government, law, media, science, and technology, and sports, among many other fields. Their contributions to the culture and success of the Bronx, New York City, and to the United States is worthy of celebration and immense pride.

The Bronx Dominican Day Parade is an exceptional event that brings together the diversity of New York City, where Dominicans and those of other heritages can gather to celebrate the successes and identity of one of the city's most important communities. The parade was created to honor the vibrant Dominican community in the Bronx, and Felipe Febles and Rosa Ayala, the parade's organizers, have worked hard to make the event the extraordinary celebration that it is today. The strong sense of unity that the parade brings to the Bronx is immeasurably important. As a Bronxite and New Yorker, I am delighted to see this event grow every year, and I am honored to march alongside the accomplished Dominican men and women in our community.

Mr. Speaker, I always look forward to this fantastic community event, and I am excited to marching in the twenty-fifth annual Bronx Dominican Day Parade on Sunday. I hope my colleagues will join me in recognizing this important occasion, and I am confident that this event will continue to be a landmark celebration for both the Dominican and Bronx communities for many years to come.